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AUTHOR Pearce, W. Barnett
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TRUST IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

by

W. Barnett Pearce
Associate Professor of Speech
University of Kentucky

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Communication between persons who trust each other differs from that between those who do not. A new conceptualization of trust is offered, drawing from game theory, credibility research, sensitivity/encounter groups, and studies of generalized expectations of trustworthiness, which makes an important distinction between the cognitive state of trust and trusting behaviors. Trusting behavior occurs only in situations in which the trusting person perceives his outcomes to be contingent upon the behavior of the other person; has some confidence in his expectations for the other's behavior; and has available options of increasing or decreasing his vulnerability to the other. The cognitive state of trust involves perceiving the other as knowing the nature of the contingency in their relationship, capable of performing the behavior he chooses and motivated to prevent unacceptably negative outcomes being conferred upon the truster. Trusting behavior consists of increasing one's vulnerability to the other, and may take many forms. Some empirical support for this conceptualization is reported and the implications of this concept for communication research are discussed.

TRUST IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Several lines of research attest to the importance of trust in communication. As an antecedent condition, mediating variable or consequent state, trust has been demonstrated to be a concept necessary to explain some of the forms and effects of communication behavior. A better understanding of trust in interpersonal relationships will make a significant contribution to communication theory and research.

Communication behavior in groups differs in significant ways depending upon the amount of trust among the participants. Gibb characterized messages occurring in a climate of distrust as evaluating others rather than accepting them, attempts to gain control of the group and strategems in the service of unannounced goals. These forms of communication are less likely when the group members are aware of reciprocated trust.[1] When a confederate deliberately engaged in trust-destroying behavior, Leathers observed participants in his groups communicating in a more tense, inflexible and personally antagonistic manner.[2] Mellinger found that the members of a research institute who trusted each other understood the others' positions more accurately if they communicated about relevant issues. However, if they did not trust the person with whom they talked, communication did not increase accuracy. Mellinger concluded that "if B is motivated to communicate with A, and if B distrusts A, then he will communicate in such a way as to conceal from A information about his own attitudes."[3]

The audience's trust is an important factor in determining the effect of a message. Other factors being the same, the counsel of trusted speakers is accepted and they may effectively use stylistic

devices which are counterproductive for low credible speakers.[4]

Communication sometimes but not always enables individuals to trust each other. Deutsch found that an opportunity to communicate increased the rate of cooperation between "individualistically" motivated subjects. Without opportunity to communicate, however, "individualistically" motivated subjects cooperated no more than those who were "competitively" motivated.[5] In another study, subjects playing a matrix game who exchanged notes perceived mutual trust more often than those who did not, and levels of trust were greatest when the notes included specific information about the relationship.[6] But communication may also be used to deceive, frustrate or provoke the other person rather than to build trust.[7] Gahagan and Tedeschi found that cooperation decreased when unbelieved promises were exchanged.[8] Communication in competitive situations was judged "almost epiphenomenal" to trust by Wallace and Rothaus, who sadly concluded that "communication seemed more to serve the end of conflict and warfare than to function in the service of conflict resolution."[9]

These studies amply demonstrate that explaining the regularities and diversities of communication behavior demands a concept such as trust, but that the relationships between trust and communication are not simple. One of the difficulties in this line of research is that, as Giffin and Patton observed, trust has traditionally "been viewed as a somewhat mystical and intangible factor defying careful definition."[10] More precisely, there are several concepts of trust in the literature, none of which is fully satisfactory and the implications of which for a study of communication have not been articulated. This paper reviews four relevant literatures and presents a new conceptualization of trust. The utility of the concept is demonstrated in a discussion of one process

by which mutual trust is formed and in a description of its implications for research. A study testing one part of this conceptualization is reported.

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF TRUST

Trust occupies an important position is several literatures, but is conceptualized quite differently in them. This paper reviews four approaches to trust: game theory; credibility research; sensitivity groups or awareness training; and Rotter's work on "generalized expectations of trustworthiness." A fifth literature, personality theory, makes much of the importance of trust but is not reviewed here because it is so diverse and because it does not seem to make a significant contribution to an understanding of trust per se.[11]

Game theory. In 1958, Deutsch noted that the word "trust" did not appear in the indices of the half-dozen "leading textbooks in social psychology."[12] Deploring neglect of this topic, he devised a method for studying trust and suspicion by observing the way subjects played matrix games.

Deutsch defined trust as an expectation that another will behave trustworthily which "leads to behavior which he perceives to have greater negative motivational consequences if the expectation is not confirmed than positive motivational consequences if it is confirmed." The opposite of trust was identified as suspicion, or behavior which expects untrustworthy behavior and involves a choice in which less is lost if the other behaves as expected than if he does not. The requirements of these definitions are met, not by accident, by the Prisoners' Dilemma game (PD). In the PD, two people are confronted with dichotomous choices, with the outcome for each depending on the decision made by both.

Each person has an option which will confer upon him (depending on the other's choice) either a highly negative (e.g., -10) or a slightly positive (e.g., +5) outcome, and an option which will confer either a slightly negative (e.g., -5) or a highly positive (e.g., +10) outcome. The "safest" choice, in terms of risking least and standing to gain the most, is to choose the option with the -5 and +10 possibilities, but the PD is arranged so that if both participants choose this option, both receive an outcome of -5. Only if both choose the "high risk" option will both receive a positive outcome. Figure 1 is a typical PD matrix. Following Deutsch's definition, person A trusts B if he

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Figure 1 about here

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chooses 2; is suspicious of B if he chooses 1. Person B is suspicious of A if he chooses X, trusts A if he chooses Y.

The appeal of this approach is that it is empirical and the observed behaviors appear to be unequivocal. The problem is that Deutsch has not explicated a conceptualization of trust and given an operational definition; rather, he has given a verbal interpretation to a particular empirical measure based on the unique characteristics of the PD game. Three criticisms of Deutsch's paradigm are appropriate. First, Deutsch's definitions necessitate an interpersonal relationship in which the participants are contingent upon each other in the precise manner described by the PD matrix. But many social situations do not resemble the PD: options are frequently more varied than the dichotomy in the PD[13] and the distribution of outcomes may differ from the PD pattern.[14] Second, trust and suspicion are not necessarily bipolar opposites. Kee and Knox questioned whether they are best considered even as points along a single dimension.[15] Consider the meaning of

"distrust": is it synonomous with "suspicion;" is it a midpoint along a "trust-suspicion" continuum; or is it a completely different concept? Deutsch's formulations provide no adequate answer. Third, the cognitive state antecedent to particular forms of behavior in the PD is not unambiguously indicated by subjects' choices.[16] Solomon identified, in addition to trust and suspicion, "exploitative play" in which one person seeks to maximize his gains at the expense of the other (in terms of Figure 1, A is exploitative if he chooses 1 while expecting B to choose Y), and "risk-taking play" in which one person chooses the high risk option (2 or Y) even though he expects the other to take the competitive option (1 or X).[17] Deutsch later realized that cooperative play may indicate trust or some other cognitive state: despair, conformity, impulsiveness or some social norm.[18]

To reduce the ambiguity of choices in PD games, several techniques have been developed. Loomis[19] and Solomon[20] developed the concept of mutual trust, in which both the subjects' intentions to play cooperatively and their expectations that the other will make the cooperative choice are measured. Tedeschi, Hiester and Gahagan analyzed sequences of behavior in the PD game to identify four "dispositions" in one of the game-players. Identifying the low-risk option (in Figure 1, the low-risk option is 1 for A, X for B) as "C" and the high-risk option (2 for A, Y for B) as "D," these sequences may occur:

Person:	Trial 1 A	Trial 1 B	Trial 2 A	Trial 2 B	A's cognitive state ("disposition")
	C	C	C	-	Trustworthy
	D	C	C	-	Repentence
	C	D	C	-	Forgiveness
	D	D	C	-	Trust

Such sequential analysis represents a significant advance over single trial observations,[21] but does not rule out strategems which encompass more than

two trials.

Kee and Knox's concept of trust is not tied to any particular matrix although it is in the context of game-playing behavior. This concept differentiates trusting behavior (such as a choice in the PD game) from the subjective probability that the other will behave trustworthily. This approach allowed Kee and Knox to distinguish between trusting behavior in which the person has little hope that the other will respond trustworthily (which these authors likened to the lifestyle of "Peanuts" character Charlie Brown) and trusting behavior in which the person has virtually complete confidence in the other's trustworthiness. The behaviors in these two cases may be identical, but their significance for the individual are quite different.[22] Unfortunately, Kee and Knox repeated the mistake for which they chastised Deutsch by implying that behavior had to be either trusting or suspicious. Further, they left the term trustworthiness undefined and their analysis of behavior in situations in which the trustworthiness of the other is questionable did not include strategies designed to determine or alter the probability of the other's trustworthiness. In his analysis of the development of trust, Swinth demonstrated that such attempts to clarify or change the trustworthiness of the other are essential. Characterizing high risk or cooperative behavior as ambiguous, Swinth believed that one person suggests to the other a renegotiation of their relationship by behaving ambiguously. If the other reciprocates, mutual trust may be established.[23]

Credibility. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle described the "ethos" or character of a public speaker as one of the three most important factors in persuasive effectiveness. Contemporary theories of persuasion similarly place great emphasis on credibility, or "the image held of a communicator at a given time by a receiver."[24] Persuasive effectiveness

is usually defined in terms of attitude or opinion change. When such changes are due to the effect of the credibility of the speaker, the audience may be said to trust the speaker.[25]

The credibility literature demonstrates that trust is multi-factorial. Aristotle considered "ethos" in terms of the speaker's intelligence (having correct opinions), character (honesty) and good will toward the audience (intentions or motivations). Hovland, Janis and Kelley wrote of two components of credibility: expertness (intelligence and the extent to which the speaker is well-informed about his topic) and trustworthiness ("the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid").[26] Giffin noted that Hovland, Janis and Kelley's description of trustworthiness combined two elements which Aristotle differentiated: general good character and specific good intentions. Arguing that character may only be described in degrees of positiveness but intentions may be either negative or positive, Giffin followed Aristotle.[27] This distinction, however, seems to be more conceptual than empirical. There is no evidence that audiences perceive differently general good character and specific good intentions toward them.

In a series of studies conducted during the early 1960's, Berlo, Lemert and Mertz factor analyzed judgments of credibility. The factors which accounted for the bulk of the variance comprised groups of questionnaire items subsequently labeled "qualification" (similar to competence or expertness) and "safety" (similar to trustworthiness). The next most important factor was dynamism, which Berlo, Lemert and Mertz perceived as an "intensifier" of qualification and safety rather than as a separate dimension.[28] Other writers have similarly found a dynamism factor in credibility, although they have interpreted it differently; Schweitzer suggested an "additive" function[29] and Pearce

and Conklin a curvilinear relation to other credibility dimensions.[30]

The extent to which the audience likes the speaker affects their readiness to change their attitudes in response to his urging. The "congruity principle" devised by Osgood and Tannenbaum predicted a movement toward "balance" when a liked speaker endorsed a disliked position.[31] At least three studies, Stone and Eswara,[32] Pearce and Conklin[33] and Pearce and Brommel,[34] found that liking varied independently of credibility measures. Unfortunately, the relation between liking and the dimensions of trustworthiness and competence is not clear. While all three may be subsets of the concept credibility, it seems more likely if less parsimoneous that liking and credibility are comparable subsets of person perception.

Sensitivity Training/Encounter Groups. In his discussion of encounter groups, Rogers identified a slowly building sense of trust as "one of the most common developments."[35] Similarly, Egan specified "the formation of a climate of trust" as one of the foremost objectives in the early stages of group interaction.[36] According to Gibb the function of T-Groups is to "augment...personal learning" which involves four "modal concerns." The first of these, acceptance, must be achieved before the others (data, goal, and control), and trust is an important part of the ability to accept others.[37] The therapeutic and enabling processes thought to occur in groups require the existence of a high level of reciprocated trust.

Although this literature is not marked by rigorous attempts to specify the meaning of trust,it is possible to extract the sense in which the term is used. A person is said to trust another if he feels that the other will, without attempts to control or direct him, act in ways beneficial both to the person doing the trusting and to himself. Discussing the risk involved in trusting others, Gibb used as synonomous

with "deep trust and confidence" the phrase "feels that people left to themselves will be creative and effective."[38] Elsewhere, Gibb described "accepting" the way oneself and other are as an indication of trust, and attempts to persuade, give advice, or disassociate as manifestations of distrust.[39] In a statement of his operating assumptions, Rogers described his trust for groups and individuals in therapy as a belief that good things would happen if he were not "directive" or controlling and had no specific goals toward which he channeled the other(s).[40] Egan described contracts as useful for groups, partly because they provide a needed element of predictability in the behavior of other group members which allows trust to develop quickly.[41]

The most explicit treatment of trust in this literature is that by Giffin and Patton, who differentiated between the attitude of trust, defined as "the introspective orientation which is a potential for action," and trusting behavior. Trusting behavior occurs when a person is 1) relying on another, 2) risking something he values and 3) attempting to achieve a desired goal. As a paradigm for the study of trust, this identifies four relevant topics: 1) the characteristics of the person who trusts; 2) the way the trusting person perceives the degree of risk he is taking; and 4) the way the trusting person perceives the value of the goal which he is trying to achieve.[42]

This literature provides remarkably sensitive anecdotes and descriptions of specific situations in which trust occurs, but is not based on reliable operational techniques for observing trust.

Generalized expectations of trustworthiness. Based on his theory of social learning, Rotter developed an instrument to measure interpersonal trust, defined in this case as "an expectancy held by an individual or

a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon."[43] It is important to note that this instrument does not measure the trust between specific individuals but generalized expectations that certain classes of others (parents, teachers, politicians, psychologists, etc.) will be trustworthy (that is, match their words with their behavior).

Rotter believed that trusting behavior in any given instance is a product of the individuals' generalized expectation of the trustworthiness of the other and his previous experience with the specific situation. In a novel situation, such as evaluating the Warren Commission Report on the assassination of President Kennedy, behavior is well predicted by such measures of "predispositions to believe or disbelieve which have no direct relationship to this particular social issue but which clearly contribute to determining reactions to it."[44]

Rotter's measuring instrument meets normal tests of reliability and validity[45] and has been used to categorize various groups in terms of their trustingness,[46] determining important factors in developing trustingness,[47] and estimating the extent to which public announcements will be accepted.[48] But the limitations of this technique are not difficult to identify. As a measure of generalized expectations, Rotter's interpersonal trust scale is situation-free, designed to predict behavior in a wide range of situations, but not necessarily in particular instances. Further, when the subjects have had "consistent experience" with a particular person or group, the test may "be expected not to predict at all."[49] Two problems occur which make the interpersonal trust scale less useful than it might appear: it requires subjects to reify the "trusted" persons when it pertains to groups and it is inversely sensitive (becomes less reliable) to experience with the trusted individual or groups. Summated measures of trust may be

useful as long as the group is undifferentiated, but if various aspects of the group are made salient (not all politicians, teachers or journalists are alike); if the subjects are less able to reify groups because they are aware of within-group differences (for example, that some promises made by a particular politician are more believable than others); or if they have had considerable experience with specific individuals, this scale is inappropriate. Unfortunately, these include the most interesting and important situations for an understanding of communication.

A CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST

None of these approaches to a study of trust are fully adequate for a theory of communication. However, each approach makes a contribution to the conceptualization offered in this paper. The argument here is that it is meaningful to speak of trust only in interpersonal relationships having certain specifiable characteristics, that trust must be considered both as a cognitive state and as a form of behavior, and that there may be a wide variety of trusting behaviors, some quite dissimilar from others.

Characteristics of situations in which trust may occur. It is meaningful to speak of trust occurring in situations in which there is some form of contingency between the truster and the trusted, the truster has some confidence in his expectations for the other's behavior and the truster has some option other than engaging in trusting behavior. Call these conditions of contingency, predictability and alternatives. If any of these conditions are not present, it is possible to show that the person's experience and/or behavior is affected in significant ways,

and it is useful to differentiate these from trust.

If there is no contingency between two people, neither "risks" anything by his behavior. This may account for the so-called "bus-rider phenomenon" in self-disclosure, in which more about one's self is revealed to a stranger with whom no subsequent interaction is expected than to an acquaintance whom one expects to see again.[50] Without predictability, a person has no basis for assuming that the other will or will not exploit his trusting behaviors. Obviously, lack of predictability is relative rather than absolute, because without knowledge of the specific other, predictions are made on the basis of an internalized concept of a "generalized other."[51] This concept is what Rotter's[52] scale seems to measure best and differences in constructions of the "generalized other" may account for predispositions to be either gullible or suspicious. When a person has no viable options other than remaining vulnerable, his behavior may be better interpreted as desperate or hopeful rather than trusting. A sport parachutist may trust his packer when he jumps, but the situation is different for a pilot whose plane has suddenly lost both wings: the behavior (jumping) may be the same but the experience with regard to the packer is quite different. Some relationships are characterized by an unequal distribution of power, in which the low power person is dependent for outcomes on the behavior of the high, but not vice-versa. In such conditions, the low power person may have no realistic alternative but to continue affiliative behavior, but it would be improper to identify this as trust. Rather, it might best be understood as an appeal to or negotiation for a norm of cooperation.[53]

The cognitive state of trust. In a situation characterized by

contingency, predictability and alternatives, a cognitive state of trust exists when one person assumes without adequate evidence that the other's behavior will not confer unacceptably negative outcomes upon him.[54]

It is helpful here to visualize a continuum from highly positive to highly negative evaluations on which each act which the other might do may be placed. Game matrices make the precise nature of the contingency explicit, with the positive or negative values of specific behaviors clearly labeled, but it is possible to analyze many interactions as if they occurred in a very complex game matrix, in some of which not all of the values of various behaviors are known.[55] The cognitive state of trust thus indicates that a person who trusts another expects him to avoid those behaviors which will result in the trusting person's receiving an unacceptibly negative outcome.

To assume that the other is worthy of trust requires that he be perceived by the trusting person as competent (in two ways) and well-intentioned. As used here, "well-intentioned" means that the trusted person is perceived as motivated to conduct himself in such a way as to avoid disastrous outcomes for the truster. Even with the best of intentions, however, the trusted person must understand the nature of the contingency between himself and the other if he is to behave appropriately. If he does not realize that one of his options would be catastrophic for the other, he cannot be expected to avoid it. And even if the trusted person is well-intentioned and knowledgeable about the nature of the contingency, he must be perceived as capable of performing the appropriate behavior to be trusted.

Trusting behaviors. Trusting behaviors are those which increase the vulnerability of the person to the other. Obviously, most social situations are complex enough that sophisticated communicators may

select between behaviors which range in the degree to which they make the person vulnerable, and the extent of vulnerability may be masked or made to appear greater than it is. Further, trusting behaviors may or may not be accompanied by a cognitive state of trust. These are important considerations, particularly for the development of mutual trust.

One important form of trusting behavior is that of interpreting ambiguous behavior as if it were trustworthy. Consider a person who was surprised at the behavior of another in a specific context. If he trusts the other, he might respond by thinking, "I certainly don't understand why he did that but I will assume that he had a good reason." This may express itself actively as public endorsements of the other or passively as deliberately not trying to persuade the other to change his mind (because, if the person is trusted, he is assumed to be competent and well-intentioned) and deliberately not trying to discover why the person acted as he did (the converse of spying, interrogating and second-guessing). These behaviors increase the person's vulnerability to the other because he abandons at least some of the means for defending himself from unacceptable outcomes if the other is untrustworthy, having made an error in judgment or acting in service to hidden exploitative motivations.

Another form of trusting behavior is that of deliberately constructing situations in which the other must choose between behavior which confers satisfactory outcomes on both or which confers extremely positive outcomes on himself but negative outcomes on the trusting person. This type of situation is clearly represented by the Prisoner's Dilemma game and occurs in social interactions such as those in which each person must choose whether and what to disclose about themselves. If one person tells the other significant things

about himself, the other may use this as an opportunity to exploit him (by blackmail, ridicule or persuasive manipulations) or he may reciprocate the disclosure, making possible the development of a caring and helping relationship. If the other person refuses to exploit the one performing the trusting behavior, he has demonstated his trustworthiness.

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING MUTUAL TRUST

The difference between the cognitive state of trust and trusting behavior may be illustrated by considering the process by which trust is sometimes developed between two persons.[56] Assume that the relationship begins at a point where neither knows much about the other, so that they have no basis for predictability. However, they find themselves in a situation in which the outcomes for each are contingent upon the other and in which both have the option to stay in the relationship or to terminate it.[57] If person A desires to develop a trusting relationship, he may proceed in this manner. First, he engages in trusting behavior without the cognitive state of trust. Properly done, and his competence as a communicator is important here, his vulnerability to the other will increase but not beyond the point where he can "afford" the loss. He may exaggerate or carefully limit the vulnerability he offers to the other. Next, A observes B's reaction. If B is exploitative, A knows that trust is inappropriate. If B responds trustworthily -- that is, by not conferring upon him what A has identified as an unacceptably negative outcome -- and follows with trusting behavior of his own, then A may develop the cognitive state of trust. In such a relationship, mutual trust is developed

incrementally and symmetrically.

A TEST OF THE CONCEPT OF TRUST

To initiate empirical test of this conceptualization, 55 students in introductory speech classes at the University of North Dakota were asked to imagine themselves sequentially in two social situations, one with a person whom they trusted very much and one a person they distrusted. The situation was described by the 2 X 2 game matrix in Figure 2. Subjects were told to consider a -5 as some behavior which they would find

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Figure 2 about here

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unpleasant, such as being publicly criticized, and the +5 as some behavior they would find pleasant, such as being publicly praised. The matrix was explained, with these points emphasized: their own outcomes were determined solely by the other; their choice did not affect either their own or the other's outcomes; and the other's outcomes were the same no matter what he chose.

The cognitive state of trust was measured in this study first by asking subjects to predict which behavior the other would choose. As shown in Table I, 98% thought that the person they trusted, but

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Table I about here

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only 20% the person they distrusted, would choose "X," which gave them the +5 outcomes. These results, not very surprising in themselves, indicated that the concept of trust as an expectation that the other would not confer upon the trusting person unacceptable or inappropriate

costs may be empirically observed.

Next, subjects were told to assume that the other had first chosen "X" and then "Y" and to indicate how they would interpret each behavior. Four responses were provided, one for each of the three aspects of the cognitive state of trust and an open-ended item. As reported in Table I, the expected behavior of both trusted and distrusted persons was primarily interpreted as a deliberate act by which those persons actualized their intentions. Unexpected behavior, however, differed. When the trusted person chose "X," most subjects interpreted this as a mistake caused by his misunderstandirg the result of that choice or an error in executing his option. Only 7% took this to signify a malevolent intention, and the 13% "other" responses generally referred to specific aspects of their relationship with the other which would account for this behavior without making the other untrustworthy.

The situation which most disconcerted these subjects occurred when the distrusted person chose "Y," conferring a +5 outcome. Table I shows that more than half of the subjects interpreted this as a mistake due to lack of knowledge or inability to execute the option, but 31% perceived the distrusted person as having favorable intentions toward them.

This is a pilot study, not one which establishes a conclusive data base from which this conceptualization of trust may be evaluated. The major limitation of this study is that it involves only the cognitive state of trust, not trusting behavior. However, these data do provide some support for the analysis of trust presented in this paper. Further, they may be interpreted as suggesting that the

three components of the cognitive state of trust are not of equal weight. Unexpected behavior seems most likely to provoke a revision of perceived competence, least likely to change perceived intentions. This indicates that perceiving another as benevolent or malevolent is more "basic" than perceived competence,[58] which has important implications for a study of trust in interpersonal communication.

DISCUSSION

In developing a theory of communication, or the more modest goal of understanding how some finite set of variables in communication are related, the concept of trust seems unavoidable. This paper presented a new conceptualization of trust in interpersonal relations, drawing upon four relevant literatures. The implications of this concept for research and theory are numerous.

Humanistically-oriented thinkers have introduced to the speech-communication discipline their concerns for facilitating personal development and interpersonal relationships characterized by honesty, validation and love. Trust is an important factor in the communication which occurs in these contexts. However, empirical research about the conditions in which trust is developed and its effect on various types of "personal" or "therapeutic" communication remains sparse. To operationalize this conceptualization of trust and relate it to communication behaviors associated with concepts such as "congruency," "empathic understanding" or "nonpossessive warmth" seems an obvious and desirable direction for further research.

The perspective of a communicologist has been shown to be an important one in understanding and, upon occasion, intervening in processes of conflict. One of a conflict manager's concerns must be ascertaining and/or increasing the level of trust between the antagonists. Studies of communication behaviors as indicators and preconditions of trust promise valuable diagnostic and strategic methods for conflict control.

If some forms of communication behavior require interpersonal trust, some important implications for communicator competence may be drawn from research demonstrating that persons differ in their

ability to trust.[59] Given relative inability to trust specific others, some persons will perform poorly in some communication contexts for reasons which the coaching of performance skills will not affect. A taxonomy of communication problems must differentiate those caused by the person's inability to enter into certain type of interpersonal relationships and those due to inadequate skills in interpreting or generating messages.

Finally, operationalizing this concept of trust seems an important way to facilitate an understanding of communication behavior per se. Stamm and Pearce[60] proposed a process model of coorientation which identifies sequences of cognitive states antecedent to different frequencies of information-seeking and information-giving behavior. These authors have recently suggested that the forms of communication behavior which occur in particular instances is at least in part due to the nature of the situation itself.[61] In this context, it seems likely that the level of trust between a speaker and listener is an unobserved variable which might exert considerable effect on the frequency and form of communication behavior in various coorientational states.

		Person B Chooses Option: X		Person B Chooses Option: Y	
Person A Chooses Option:	1	Outcomes for: A: -5	Outcomes for: B: -5	Outcomes for: A: +10	Outcomes for: B: -10
	2	Outcomes for: A: -10	Outcomes for: B: +10	Outcomes for: A: +5	Outcomes for: B: +5

Figure 1. A Typical Prisoners' Dilemma Matrix

		The other person chooses: X		The other person chooses: Y	
		Outcomes for:		Outcomes for:	
	1	You	Him	You	Him
		-5	+5	+5	+5
		Outcomes for:		Outcomes for:	
You choose:	2	You	Him	You	Him
		-5	+5	+5	+5

Figure 2. Game Matrix used in a Study of the Cognitive State of Trust

TABLE I

INTERPRETATIONS OF BEHAVIOR CONFERRING COSTS OR REWARDS

		The Trusted Person	The Distrusted Person
Expected to confer	Costs (choice A)	2%	80%
	Rewards (Choice B)	98%	20%
If the other chose A, would interpret this as indicating:			
	lack of knowledge about the contingency:	68%	5%
	lack of ability to perform:	13%	5%
	willingness to confer costs:	7%	76%
	other:	13%	14%
If the other chose B, would interpret this as indicating:			
	lack of knowledge about the contingency:	5%	31%
	lack of ability perform:	—	27%
	willingness to confer rewards:	82%	31%
	other:	13%	10%

FOOTNOTES

[1] J. R. Gibb, "Climate for Trust Formation," in T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method, ed. L. Bradford, J.R. Gibb and K. Benne (New York: John Wiley, 1964), pp. 279-309.

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[56]This analysis is similar to that by Swinth.

[57]All relationships in which the opportunity for trust is newly present are not well described in this way. For example, two persons may know each other quite well and suddenly find that their outcomes are contingent upon each other. Assuming that each has the option of increasing or decreasing his vulnerability, they may make decisions about trust based on considerable predictability.

[58]This interpretation is supported by Asch's studies which demonstrate that some traits in person perception are more important than others and that "warmth"/"coldness" is perhaps the most important of all. "Warmth" seems more closely related to intentions than to either knowledge or capability.

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